

RESEARCH NOTE

VACATIONING AT SEA AGAIN: WHO AND WHY?

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This article analyzes the factors influencing the intention to cruise again, comparing male and female cruisers as well as first-timers and repeat cruisers. A case study on Australian cruisers revealed the need for a targeted marketing approach and some similarities toward a more general advertising effort. Contrary to previous studies, brand loyalty to cruise line is found to be less important than cruise destination. However, men—unlike women—were influenced by a cruise recommended by others and interesting ports of calls, whereas women valued cruise experience over cruise destination. Among first-timers, women were more likely to cruise again; however, to attract repeat cruisers, there needs to be a deeper understanding of preferences underlying a good cruise experience.

Key words: First-timers; Repeat cruisers; Gender; Ordered probit regression

Introduction

Although revisit behavior/repurchase intent has long been researched in tourism and marketing, here the cruise industry is examined to understand the factors influencing people's intention to cruise again because this industry is relatively young and remains understudied (Hur & Adler, 2013). In addition, a case study on Australian cruisers is overdue because Australia is the fifth highest source of cruise passengers in the world (Business Research and Economic Advisors, 2014).

A review of the literature on cruising shows that why people cruised has been examined based on

their motivational considerations, differences in perceived value of cruises, differences in age cohorts, and their vocational attributes (see Brida, Scuderi, & Seijas, 2014; Hung & Pertick, 2011; Jones, 2011). Whereas Park and Petrick (2009) as well as Yarnal, Kerstetter, and Yen (2005) explained why there are not more people who cruise, Brida, Pulina, Riano, and Zappata-Aguire (2012) as well as Gabe, Lynch, and McConnon (2006) considered factors affecting visit intention to the destination they have cruised before but as a land tourist. However, Brida and Risso (2010) as well as Silvestre, Santos, and Ramalho (2008) analyzed the attractiveness of the same destination to cruisers. Although

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Douglas, Mills, and Phelan (2010); Duman and Mattila (2005); Hwang and Han (2014); as well as Petrick (2004) did consider the intention to cruise again, this was for the use of the same cruise line to examine brand loyalty. However, customers may switch service providers for some variety (Sanchez-Gracia, Zeelenberg, & Bigné, 2012), and not all cruise lines go to all destinations, thus indicating the need to go beyond the intention to use the same cruise line.

Thus, this article focuses on the more general question as to what type of people cruise again, and why they cruise again. The second contribution of the article is the distinction between consumer types, comparing first-time and repeat cruisers, as well as male and female cruisers, to shed light on marketing strategies.

The Survey Data and Research Method

The data come from an online survey undertaken between February and March 2014 by a survey sampling firm in Sydney. The 359 Australians composing the sample were 25 years of age and older who went on an international cruise for 5 days or more. The variables for analysis in Table 1 are chosen from the existing literature.

The intention to cruise again within the next 3 years is used as the dependent variable based on a 5-point Likert scale, denoting *very likely*, *likely*, *maybe*, *unlikely*, and *very unlikely*. The ordered probit model is given by

$$y^* = \sum_{i=1}^k \beta_i X_i + \varepsilon,$$

Table 1
Survey Statistics

Variable	Mean (SD)	% of Respondents
Average age of respondents (years)	58.50 (27.81)	
No. of cruise trips in the last 5 years	2.61 (2.18)	
Gender of respondent		
Female		52.92
Male		47.08
Marital status		
Single, widowed, or separated		25.24
Married/in a relationship		74.76
Educational attainment		
Postgraduate		19.81
University		31.95
Vocational training		17.25
Up to high school		30.99
Visit same destination again		28.41
First time cruisers		34.82
Cruise destination is more important than cruise line		63.70
Cruise experience is more important than cruise destination		55.12
Ports of call are more important than cruise destination		66.89
Overall satisfaction from past cruise trips ^a	4.12 (1.14)	
Likelihood of cruising again within 3 years ^a	4.17 (1.52)	
Importance of: ^a		
Cruise recommended by others	3.63 (1.10)	
Reputation of cruise lines	4.13 (0.72)	
Size of cruise ship	3.81 (1.11)	
Ship activities and onboard entertainment	3.99 (0.99)	
Timing of cruise	4.11 (0.83)	
Most things included in one price	4.22 (0.89)	
Sense of getting away	4.18 (0.86)	
Meeting new people	4.00 (0.91)	

^aBased on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very low*) to 5 (*very high*).

where y^* is the latent index of j categories determined by factors, X_s , and a normally distributed error term, ϵ . The probability that y is in category j is computed using the maximum likelihood estimation technique in the STATA econometric software.

Results and Analysis

Table 2 provides the results with model validity shown by the significant chi-square ratio of all the log likelihood values and their acceptable prediction rates of at least 60%. It can be seen that the more cruises taken in the last 5 years, the more likely is the intention to cruise again, in line with the argument of cumulative inertia and the Recency–Frequency–Monetary Value paradigm of Hughes (1995). The cruising experience also makes respondents familiar with what to expect for their next trip and therefore feel comfortable to want to cruise again. With women, the older crowd is likely to cruise again. However, the timing of the cruise is not significant, possibly because cruises are already well-timed and sufficiently frequent.

Cruise destination is more important than the choice of the cruise line for both genders. However, for men, cruise destination is less important than the ports of call. In relation to cruise experience, the social aspect of meeting new people is influential on women's, but not men's, decision to cruise again. The feeling of a "sense of get away" that motivates cruising was not significant enough to induce cruising again because the sense of escapism can also be experienced on land travel when one goes away.

For male cruisers, the reputation of the cruise line matters more than for women, and they consider the recommendation of the cruise important, unlike women. For the latter, the size of the cruise ship as explained by Kwortnik (2008) constitutes the internal "shipscape" element of the physical environment, providing a broader experiential context. Lastly, the fact that most things are included in the cruise price is significant for both genders shows that the convenience of not having to worry about every dimension of onboard expenditure matters.

It can also be seen that age is insignificant for first-timers, and male first-timers are unlikely to

cruise again. Thus, marketers attracting first-time cruisers to cruise again may benefit by targeting women. Also, the better educated among the first-timers tend to cruise again. Education is highly correlated to income, and although cruise prices have declined over the years, they are still relatively more expensive compared to other holidays (see Yarnal et al., 2005). The impact of the number of past trips on the tendency to cruise again can, however, go either way. For example, familiarity with a travel mode can motivate people to stick to this type of holiday. At the same time, cruisers may feel that there are limits to the variety offered in cruising that excited them, or if they have already been on cruises they had set out to do, then the chances of cruising in the near future can be low.

Although cruise destination is more important than the choice of a cruise line, cruise experience over cruise destination is the determining factor when it comes cruising again for both first-timers and repeat cruisers. Ports of call are also more crucial than cruise destination for repeat cruisers. The size of the cruise ship, ship activities, and onboard entertainment are significant for first-timers and so is the sense of getting away, given that it is a new vacation experience for them. First-timers also rely on recommended cruises because they may want to ensure they enjoy their next cruise choice, feeling comforted that others have enjoyed the same cruise. However, they are not concerned with the cruise line's reputation because there are other more important considerations, whereas repeat cruisers care only to some extent about reputation. It could be that repeat cruisers want a change in their experience of different cruise lines or cruise lines could be perceived to be similar in what they offer. Thus, there is no robust evidence on brand loyalty in the Australian sample considered here compared to previous studies.

Conclusion

The empirical analysis on the intention to cruise again is general unlike previous studies' focus on cruising again using the same cruise line or cruising to the same destination. The results are important for marketing effectively and catering to different segments of the cruise consumer industry. For

Table 2
Estimates on Intention to Cruise Again

Variable	Male Cruisers	Female Cruisers	First-Time Cruisers	Repeat Cruisers
No. of cruises in the last 5 years	0.18 (0.11)*	0.32 (0.16)**	N/A	0.14 (0.07)**
Male	N/A	N/A	-0.147 (0.07)**	0.99 (0.43)
Age	-0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)*	0.20 (0.37)	0.20 (0.09)**
Education	0.08 (0.12)	0.11 (0.10)	0.57 (0.28)**	0.34 (0.31)
Retired	0.84 (0.37)**	-0.14 (0.26)	-	0.17 (0.09)**
Married/in a relationship	0.11 (0.14)	0.10 (0.14)	0.13 (0.07)*	0.12 (0.06)**
First-time cruiser	0.26 (0.33)	-0.14 (0.33)	N/A	N/A
Overall satisfaction	0.13 (0.06)**	0.30 (0.11)**	0.04 (0.02)**	0.04 (0.02)**
Cruise destination is more important than cruise line	0.55 (0.31)*	0.43 (0.25)*	0.19 (0.09)**	0.11 (0.05)**
Cruise experience is more important than cruise destination	0.19 (0.28)	0.44 (0.22)**	0.09 (0.04)**	0.04 (0.02)**
Ports of call are more important than cruise destination	0.45 (0.27)*	-0.02 (0.25)	0.23 (0.15)	0.28 (0.14)**
Size of cruise ship	-0.06 (0.16)	0.38 (0.15)**	0.11 (0.05)**	0.19 (0.10)*
Reputation of cruise lines	0.31 (0.15)**	0.12 (0.07)*	0.34 (0.25)	0.28 (0.16)*
Ship activities and onboard entertainment	-0.01 (0.105)	-0.26 (0.19)	0.09 (0.05)**	0.07 (0.05)
Cruise is recommended by others	0.47 (0.19)**	0.19 (0.16)	0.27 (0.13)**	0.20 (0.11)**
Timing of cruise	0.26 (0.24)	0.13 (0.15)	0.05 (0.18)	-0.06 (0.11)
Sense of get away	0.02 (0.19)	0.04 (0.17)	0.16 (0.08)**	0.01 (0.07)
Most things included in one price	0.43 (0.21)**	0.29 (0.14)**	0.01 (0.04)**	0.18 (0.09)**
Meeting new people	0.10 (0.24)	0.29 (0.15)**	0.20 (0.16)	0.16 (0.07)**
Constant	2.37 (1.01)**	-3.12 (1.48)**	1.18 (0.58)**	2.02 (0.95)**
Sample size	169	190	125	234
Log likelihood	-148.62***	-186.47***	-109.52***	-254.67***
% correctly predicted	68.19	63.46	65.34	67.92

Note. Standard errors are in parentheses. A dash indicates that this variable was dropped from the estimation because it had only 18 retirees in this group.

* $p < 0.10$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$.

instance, the common factors significant to all cruisers can be emphasized in the beginning of a cruise brochure, and there could be separate sections highlighting different features to attract cruisers to cruise again. For first-timers, providing a discount for their next cruise may help because it is those with higher purchasing power among this group who would consider cruising again.

The finding that ship activities and onboard entertainment are insignificant for repeat cruisers is relevant for cruise lines. From a product standpoint, there must be more than an array of feature-rich innovative facilities, amenities, and services that exceed the expectations of a growing population undertaking cruises. Brand loyalty to cruise lines is less important than what previous studies found. Instead, cruise experience and cruise destination are more important in inducing people to cruise again. Thus, cruise lines could consider diversifying the destinations they sail to, and from a managerial standpoint, ports of call—especially for repeat cruisers—must be carefully chosen to offer a variety of options and activities on disembarking.

Readers are however cautioned that implications from this study are based on Australian respondents and may not be generalized to other cultures or citizens of other countries. Also, it remains to be seen whether these results hold for domestic cruises. Lastly, because cruise studies are a shifting tide of knowledge where information can change rapidly, there is a continuing need to keep abreast of such dynamics to contribute toward relevant findings for this industry.

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